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AUTHOR Wilson, Valerie; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This report contains findings of an evaluation of the first phase of Tayside Region's (Scotland) Devolved School Management (DSM) scheme. The evaluation sought to evaluate the first phase of implementation and to suggest ways in which the scheme and accompanying training might be improved. Sixty schools chose to participate in the first phase, initiated in April 1994. Data were obtained through document analysis, interviews with finance officers and headteachers, and focus group meetings with headteachers and school staff. Findings indicate that the overall response to the scheme was positive. Despite overall fears, headteachers did not report significant increases in their workloads or changes in their role. Additionally, expectations for DSM may have been unrealistically high. Focused training, additional support, and opportunities for role clarification will contribute to effective implementation and reduce feelings of uncertainty. Recommendations are made to develop intradepartmental relationships in order to support headteachers, integrate other initiatives such as school-development planning and staff development with the program, develop evaluation methods that consult schools, and disseminate examples of good practice among schools. Five tables and 3 figures are included. (Contains 22 references.) (LMI)

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Devolved School Management in Tayside Region

Valerie Wilson
Elizabeth McFall
Anne Pirrie

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A report arising from an evaluation of the first phase of the devolved school management scheme in Tayside Region commissioned by Tayside Region Education Department between November 1994 and January 1995. The final report includes comments from headteachers and regional officials following discussion of the draft report.

The views expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Scottish Council for Research in Education or Tayside Region Education Department.

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Preface

In November 1994, a small team of three researchers from the Scottish Council for Research in Education began an evaluation of Phase 1 of the implementation of Devolved School Management within Tayside Region. For the first phase, initiated in April 1994, 60 schools including 6 secondary, 51 primary and 3 special schools opted to join. The evaluation ran from November 1994 to March 1995 and its basic aims were to:

- evaluate the first phase of the implementation and
- suggest ways in which the scheme and the accompanying training might be more effectively organised, presented and evaluated so as to facilitate the introduction of subsequent phases of the scheme.

Moves to increase the devolution of resource and financial management responsibilities to the school level and the subsequent changes in the role of headteacher have been the focus of educational debate during the past few years. (McPherson 1989, Chapman 1990, Angus 1994)

Although the Scottish Office Education Department provided guidelines (SOED 1993) for the devolution process, regional education authorities have established their own particular schemes which, while taking cognisance of national guidelines, have tended to reflect local priorities and needs. In planning the devolution of school management, Tayside Region Education Department stressed the importance of partnership as an underlying principle and expressed the hope that its particular scheme would be 'based upon a broad consensus of elected members, school boards, headteachers and school staff.' Therefore, any evaluation undertaken must not only judge the extent to which the overall aim of the scheme—that is to improve the teaching and learning process—has been achieved but also whether the methods used accord with the concept of partnership.

The fact that Phase 1 of the Tayside scheme was voluntary might be seen as a factor which influenced the overall positive response as reported in this evaluation process. For a variety of reasons, some headteachers participated in the first phase of the implementation process but, as our research demonstrated, this should not be interpreted as unconditional support for the principle of devolved management. For some the choice was informed by pragmatism—their past experiences showed that there tended to be more support available at the beginning of any new initiative.

We would argue that, while it was not possible to sample all schools within the project timetable, the views represented here are fairly typical of staff within the Region. The overall response to the scheme was positive and with minor changes to its administration and training, the implementation of the next phase could be facilitated.

It should be noted that as a formative evaluation this report is already a historical document. The evaluation was undertaken during a period of rapid change and before one cycle of the DSM scheme had been completed. Following ongoing review of the scheme, some items such as the revision of training and the INTEGRA computer system, which we refer to in this report have already been addressed by Tayside Region.

We wish to acknowledge the help and co-operation of a number of people: Norman Erskine, Sandy Weston and Gillian Dugdale—all members of the Directorate of Education in Tayside Region—who provided insights into the working of devolved school management and assistance in establishing the focus groups.

We are grateful to the headteachers, other promoted staff in schools, support staff and area finance officers who agreed either to be interviewed individually or participated in the focus group meetings.

We hope that we have fairly represented the views of all who participated in the evaluation process and that they gained from sharing their perceptions of devolved school management with other colleagues.

Executive Summary

In November 1994, a small team of researchers from the Scottish Council for Research in Education began an evaluation of Phase 1 of the scheme of Devolved School Management (DSM) within Tayside Region. For the first phase, initiated in April 1994, 60 schools including 6 secondary, 51 primary and 3 special schools, opted to join.

Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to review the implementation of the scheme with schools which had entered the first phase and to suggest ways in which the efficacy of the scheme and the accompanying training might be improved prior to the next phase of development. It should be noted that the evaluation commenced before the completion of one cycle of DSM in order that changes could be incorporated into the implementation of Phase 2 in April 1995.

The current evaluation process involved the following activities:

- briefing from members of the Education Directorate
- analysis of the Tayside scheme and accompanying training materials
- a small number of preliminary interviews with finance officers and headteachers to sensitise the evaluation team to the dominant issues
- five focus group meetings with headteachers, other promoted staff and support staff from a sample of schools participating in Phase 1
- one focus group meeting with staff about to enter the second phase of the scheme
- circulation of the interim report to a sample of headteachers.

Findings

The main findings were that:

- the overall response to the scheme had been positive
- despite initial fears, headteachers did not report significant increases in their workloads or changes in their role
- adequate levels of support and participative training were essential
- the roles and inter-relationships between various departments in the region should be developed in order to support headteachers
- methods of consultation which accorded with the principle of partnership were largely underdeveloped
- examples of the impact on the teaching and learning environment could be identified and include the purchase of equipment and the redesign of teaching areas
- links between other initiatives such as school development planning and staff development and review were relatively underdeveloped and would benefit from integration
- methods of evaluation which consulted schools and disseminated examples of good practice amongst schools should be developed.

Some of the proposed changes identified in this report have now been implemented. The full report and recommendations follow.

1 Background, Aims and Methods

1.1 Aims of devolved school management

Following consultation during 1992, the Scottish Office Education Department proposed changes in the way schools should be managed (SOED, 1993). Education authorities in Scotland were asked to produce administrative schemes of devolved management for their schools based upon clearly-specified principles and within a timetable for a phased introduction. The schemes should provide for responsibility for financial and managerial decision-making to be devolved to headteachers, with a requirement to consult their school boards, where these existed, on the exercise of those responsibilities. Schemes were to be in place for twenty-five per cent of schools in each region by April 1994, and for all schools by April 1996.

In the guidelines issued to regional authorities, the Scottish Office (SOED 1993 *op cit*) reiterated the Government's firm belief that devolving managerial responsibilities to school level would have beneficial effects. While acknowledging concerns expressed by many consultees that identical arrangements to those operating in England and Wales, under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) initiative might not suit all Scottish circumstances, the Secretary of State suggested that the 'cumulative effects of devolving decision-making to school level will therefore be to improve the quality of education provided in schools throughout Scotland'. Tayside Region's scheme of Devolved School Management (DSM) takes cognisance of those guidelines and states that the general aim of its particular scheme was to 'improve the teaching and learning process in Tayside schools'. It identifies the principle of partnership as a key theme to underpin the scheme.

While recognising the advantages to be gained from delegating certain areas of managerial decision-making to the school level, the Region argued that the scheme should be based upon a broad consensus of elected members, school boards, parents, headteachers and school staff which would continue to support a strong service from the authority. In particular the proposed delegation reaffirms the primacy of headteachers as educational leaders especially in the area of curriculum development.

The specific aims of the Tayside scheme may be summarised as to:

- promote partnership
- achieve a balance between decision-making at local level and central services
- give schools greater flexibility and choice
- allow schools to respond quickly to changing priorities
- support the role of headteacher
- encourage staff involvement in decision-making
- achieve more efficient use of educational resources
- promote greater accountability
- promote consistency and quality rather than uniform service delivery.

Any evaluation must take account of the stated aims of the scheme and the extent to which those involved in the implementation process considered that these have been achieved within the existing time frame.

1.2 The implementation plan

Tayside Region planned a phased implementation based upon schools volunteering to participate in the process. A first phase was initiated in April 1994 which 60 schools — 6 secondary, 51 primary and 3 special schools —opted to join. Another 93 schools —17 secondary and 76 primary schools —indicated an interest and will join the second phase of the scheme in April 1995. Finally, a target date of April 1996 has been set by which time all the Region's 220 schools will have entered.

Phasing in an innovative scheme on a voluntary basis has certain advantages. One might assume that headteachers who volunteered for the first phase were more enthusiastic and likely to put more effort into its implementation. However, in this case it created certain practical difficulties caused by the distribution of schools within the three areas and the disparate workloads of the three finance officers who supported those areas.

The number and type of schools opting for each phase of the scheme according to administrative area is shown below.

Table 1.1 *Phases of the implementation: showing the number of schools in each phase*

Districts	Angus			Dundee			Perth		
Phases	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Schools :									
Primary	18	28	10	16	23	17	17	26	33
Secondary	4	3	1	0	9	6	2	6	3
Special	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
Totals	22	31	11	17	31	23	21	32	36

As the above table shows in the Dundee area, no secondary school entered Phase 1 but nine secondary schools are scheduled to enter Phase 2. Additionally, Perth district has the largest number of primary schools, including significant numbers of both large and small schools, scheduled to enter the last phase of DSM. The effects of this distribution will be discussed in more detail in the findings and recommendations.

1.3 Commitment to evaluation

In its DSM scheme, the Region gave a commitment to evaluation and stated that:

> the scheme will be evaluated and reviewed for the second phase in April 1995...as a consequence of this it may be necessary to vary or amend the scheme.

Additionally, there would be ongoing monitoring of the budget allocation formula. It is clear that a formative evaluation is required which will allow the Region to review the scheme in the light of the experiences of those who participated in the first phase of its implementation. In the training materials which accompanied the scheme, the region proposed that evaluation should adopt the model displayed in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 *Evaluation model proposed by the Region*

Content of the scheme	+	Implementation of the scheme	=	Interim Progress Questionnaire August 1994	>	Evaluation September 1994

An earlier evaluation, using questionnaires, was undertaken by a member of the Tayside Directorate. Responses were received from thirty schools in Phase 1—a response rate of approximately fifty-two per cent. To the essential evaluation question: 'what effects has the scheme had on learning and teaching?' 17 respondents thought there had been an improvement, 10 identified no effect and 3 recorded a deterioration.

These results were not atypical. Other researchers had identified similar concerns which we will consider in the next section.

1.4 Issues from the literature

The social and political context

The delegation of more management responsibilities to schools represents one of the most significant changes in educational management thinking in recent years. Initiatives have been implemented in England and Wales as a consequence of the Education Reform Act (1988). The generic term, school-based management has been used to describe such schemes which Chapman (1990) defined as follows:

> School-based management refers to a form of educational administration in which the school becomes the primary unit for decision-making. ... This has resulted in a wide range of decisions relevant to such areas as curriculum, personnel and budgeting being made by members of the school community at the school site.

It would be a mistake however to regard school-based decision-making as an exclusively British phenomenon. Caldwell (1990) recorded the development of trends towards 'self-management' in countries including Australia, France, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. It has been argued that these international trends in policy initiatives are best seen in the context of political, economic, cultural and social pressures and that a full analysis of these pressures has yet to be conducted (Seddon *et al*, 1990).

These arguments are echoed elsewhere. McPherson (1989) contends that United Kingdom policies arising out of the 1988 Education Reform Act should be understood as the culmination of the financial and moral aspects of Conservative party thought. The policy of parental choice, of which Local Management of Schools (LMS)/DSM forms part, could simultaneously address the increasing costs of education provision and the consumer sovereignty of parents.

A further concern in the literature relates to the fact that DSM was introduced at a time of financial restraints. Angus (1994) argues that:

> Within a climate of expenditure cuts in education and in the public sector generally, local school management begins to sound like a euphemism for devolving to schools the blame for cutbacks.

A range of interpretations of devolved management schemes exists within the literature. These range from those which regard the scheme as a politically motivated New Right policy initiative, to those which see such decentralisation as 'administrative rather than political' (Caldwell, 1990). Whilst the debate regarding the underlying motivation and intentions of devolved management schemes continues, what emerges is considerable change in the role of education authorities and their relationships with schools. As Corsar (1994) put it:

> ... these new education authorities will have to adopt a strategic role in terms of educational management, less involved with direct control over what happens in the schools and more concerned with specifying the desired level of service and regularly monitoring performance with a view to achieving high quality provision.

It has been argued that education authorities will adopt a new enabling role with an emphasis on collaboration and partnership rather than direct provision (Lincoln and Handscomb, 1994; Trinick, 1994). Concern has been expressed about exactly what this will mean in practice (MacKenzie, 1990). Some including Sinclair (1994), have advocated the continued involvement of the authorities, not only in an advisory and supportive role, but also to secure school accountability to education policies.

The roles of the headteacher and other staff

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the need to develop a new culture of leadership within schools. As Purkey and Smith (1985) point out, headteachers should be able to demonstrate:

> ... the capacity to articulate and win commitment to a vision for the school and ensure that vision is institutionalised in the structures, processes and procedures which shape everyday activities.

Lincoln and Handscomb (1994) argue that in a climate of devolved budgets, it is incumbent upon senior managers in schools to demonstrate that they can add value rather than create costs. Their task has increasingly become one of empowering those below them.

As the role of headteachers expands, concerns have been expressed regarding the extent to which headteachers are in danger of becoming swamped in a variety of responsibilities ranging from administration to buildings maintenance at the expense of curricular involvement. As Smith (1990), herself a primary headteacher reported:

> It should not fall to my lot to be property surveyor, building inspector, meter reader, heating engineer, toilet unblocker and general factotum.

The impact of devolved management upon staff roles has varied according to size and type of school. The evidence from England and Wales indicates that many secondary schools have appointed bursars or finance officers to assume the heavy financial responsibilities of administering large budgets and thus to conserve headteachers' time. As Kimber (1990) argues:

> Education was our raison d'être and it was essential that finance, buildings and contracts should not interfere with the continued development of the teaching of the children. The governors were eager, therefore, to appoint a business manager who would remove the non-educational management of running the school from the teaching staff.

In smaller schools the extra burden of administration tended to be shared between the headteacher and administrative support staff and importance is placed on delegating administrative duties. As Smith (1990) points out:

> As a headteacher I could not cope with the amount of extra work that had to be done without delegating to others. The greater burden of work ... made it vital that the governing body ensured that the school would have the full complement of support staff to meet the new demands...

These experiences are borne out in a recent study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) which found that since the introduction of LMS around fifty per cent of secondary schools and fifteen per cent of primary schools had appointed a finance officer to the senior management team. As Maychell (1994) explains:

> Sixty-five per cent of primary heads and forty per cent of secondary heads said there had been a *large increase* in the amount of time they spent on financial management

and administration. The difference is likely to be accounted for in part by the greater number of secondary schools employing a bursar after LMS.

Time management

Perceptions of how managers use their time are notoriously unreliable. Other research (Kakabadse, 1993) concerning the nature of managerial work has highlighted its episodic nature and the fact that most managers cannot recall accurately exactly what they do during the working day. School management would appear to be no exception and headteachers must already manage a role which includes contact with pupils, staff and parents. In addition, they have responsibilities which include administration, curriculum development, property, resources and finance. Clearly in this evaluation, the identification of the possible effects of the scheme on the existing workload of headteachers and any consequent role changes are important. There is little published work on the effects of DSM in Scottish schools. A recent report from the Association of Headteachers in Scotland (1995) argues the case for parity of managerial time and support in primary and secondary schools. However, unpublished research (Barr 1994) which records the use of a time log during the pilot stage of devolved school management in another region has confirmed that although there was no significant increase in the length of the headteacher's working day, areas such as curriculum development and pupil contact were vulnerable. Time spent in these areas could be eroded as headteachers dealt with unexpected managerial tasks. This is an issue which will be explored in Chapter 2.

Impact upon learning and teaching

The stated intention of school-based management schemes is to improve the quality of learning and teaching in schools. Yet persistent fears have been articulated that the delegation of management responsibilities to schools is in some way a distraction from the primary educational processes of teaching and learning. According to Caldwell (1990), if DSM is to be effective:

> A broader perspective must be adopted so that budgeting is seen as an important phase of the educational planning process wherein goals are set, needs are identified, policies are formulated, priorities are established and resources are allocated so that, as far as possible, the learning needs of every student can be addressed.

Devolved management schemes are still at a relatively early stage of implementation, as are other management initiatives such as headteacher review (see for example Lowden and Powney, 1993 for an evaluation of the latter in Tayside Region). There is evidence that DSM has the potential to benefit schools. However, indications from England and Wales show that there have been both 'winners and losers'. As Maychell (1994) points out:

> There was evidence that the combination of the school's circumstances when LMS was introduced, in conjunction with its formula funding had created winners and losers. To improve the education of some pupils at the expense of others, which is what the impact of LMS may well turn out to be, is not realising the potential that all of the heads we spoke to felt that LMS had.

Interestingly, respondents in this current evaluation rejected completely the notion of 'winners and losers' in Tayside Region. There are material differences in the two schemes particularly in the type of budget allocation and the role assigned to headteachers. In England and Wales financial responsibility was devolved to school governors, not headteachers. McDowell (1994), a former headteacher in a Scottish primary school, gives a fuller description of the differences between the operation of LMS in England and Wales and DSM in Scotland.

1.5 Current evaluation aims

Taking cognisance of indicators from the literature, earlier evaluations and the specification issued by the Region, the aims of this study were to evaluate the benefits to date of Phase 1 of DSM in Tayside Region and suggest possible amendments either to the scheme or the training before the start of Phase 2. Specifically, the evaluation sought to:

- comment on the clarity and logic of the scheme paying particular attention to roles and responsibilities
- establish staff perceptions of the scheme with regard to staff development, property issues, supplies and services
- develop a model for assessing the effect of the scheme on teaching and learning
- assess the level of support required to implement the scheme
- comment on the perceived efficacy of the training offered to support the scheme
- identify consultative arrangements which had been established by schools
- suggest appropriate methods for future evaluation.

1.6 Research methods

In its published DSM scheme, Tayside Region reiterated its commitment to a process of consultation and evaluation and this was demonstrated by the evaluation already undertaken by a member of the Directorate. Given the existence of this data collected by questionnaire in September 1994, it was decided to avoid unnecessary duplication. Therefore, the methods chosen for the current evaluation were informed by :

- a recognition of the competing demands on the time of staff already engaged in implementing innovative practices
- an attempt to avoid duplication of both effort and methodology
- a desire to seek a method which would allow teaching and support staff to explore their perceptions interactively in order to generate suggestions for possible improvements.

The main methods of collecting data are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 *Research methods*

Method	Sample	Rationale
semi-structured interviews	3 area finance officers 2 headteachers 1 depute headteacher	to sensitise researchers to main issues identified by sample of groups involved
focus groups meetings	5 groups of 9 staff members	to explore the perceptions of groups of teaching and support staff involved in Phase 1
	1 group of 9 staff members	to explore perceptions of a group of staff about to enter Phase 2
documentary analysis	analysis of Tayside document	to explore the logical consistency of the scheme and accompanying training materials
circulation of draft report	sample of headteachers	validation of focus group findings

Increasingly evaluators are seeking methods which not only enable them to probe the perceptions of respondents but also encourage respondents to interact with others thus

exploring and developing ideas further. Focus groups, a method first developed for market research purposes, is one such method now being employed. A focus group is a small group of between six and ten participants who meet to explore a particular topic with the aid of an experienced group facilitator.

As a qualitative research method, it has been used extensively not only to aid product or service development but also to evaluate organisational innovation as in this case. Compared with questionnaires or other survey methods, the focus group method is flexible allowing ideas to be generated, probed and confirmed in a group situation. In order to focus the discussions and guarantee a uniform approach across the six focus groups, a topic guide developed from the preliminary sensitising interviews was used by the researchers.

No particular preparation was required of the participants, only a willingness to contribute opinions within groups composed of headteachers, other promoted teachers and support staff from a sample of schools within their area. Some of the participants knew each other, especially the headteachers, but for many this was an opportunity to meet new colleagues and discuss issues of common interest in a neutral forum.

Although the primary purpose of a focus group is to collect information for evaluation purposes, a secondary outcome, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section, is the increased knowledge and sense of commitment which participants feel as a consequence of the group discussions. This was an additional incentive to utilise the focus group method.

1.7 Proposed timetable

The timetable was governed by a number of factors. These included:

- the commitment to evaluation articulated in the Tayside scheme
- the already agreed and published time scale for the implementation of subsequent phases of the scheme
- the established cycle of Education Committee meetings within the Region.

Given these constraints, it was necessary to conduct the evaluation in a very short period of time so that the information generated would be available for consideration by members of the directorate and elected members. The actual timetable is shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 *Timetable of the evaluation*

	Stage	Activities	Time scale
1.	Preliminary	Sensitising interviews with sample of headteachers and area finance officers	November 1994
2.	Data Collection	Series of focus group meetings with staff from Phase 1 and Phase 2 schools	December 1994
3.	Analysis and Reporting	Documentary and data analysis Production of interim report	January 1995
4.	Validation	Circulation of draft report to sample of headteachers and directorate	March 1995
5.	Reporting	Production of final report	May 1995

This section has sought to place the current evaluation project into the context of a national trend towards the devolution of more management responsibilities to headteachers. It should also be noted that this innovation was occurring in a climate of cost containment within the public sector and impending reorganisation of local government in Scotland—both of which impinged on the perceptions of those tasked with the implementation of DSM. Additionally, administrative initiatives within the Region, for example a new central computerised accounting system - INTEGRA- were being introduced. All of these impacted upon DSM. We have described the commitment of Tayside Region to both the concept of partnership and to the process of evaluation, identified the aims, methods and timetable employed by the research team. The detailed findings of the process will be discussed in the next section.

2 Detailed Findings

In Chapter 1 we described the background to DSM and the main aims of this current evaluation. In this chapter the data from the interviews and focus group meetings have been analysed and presented under themes which represent the evaluation questions posed by the Region. We have selected verbatim quotations from the data where this seemed appropriate and supported the findings. Inevitably during the process of data reduction some individual opinions may have to be subsumed but we hope that we have accurately interpreted the dominant perceptions of those who participated in the evaluation.

Because of the pressure of time, certain groups such as parents, school board members, union representatives and staff from property services which, for the sake of balance, one would have wished to include, are not represented here. We would suggest that this be taken into account in the distribution and discussion of this report.

2.1 How is the DSM scheme perceived?

Despite any earlier reservations which staff might have held, overall the response to Phase 1 DSM was positive. One might argue that this is to be expected from the first phase schools—all of which were volunteers and that the real problems, if they are to occur, will surface as implementation proceeds to schools in the second and third waves.

It was beyond the remit of this evaluation to explore the intentions of headteachers who took their schools into the first phase, however, some offered explanations which might provide a useful insight into attitudes towards innovation. Some headteachers were openly cavalier and reported that 'I'll volunteer for anything'; while others took a more pragmatic stance of: 'it is better to be first because there will be more support at the beginning'.

The perceptions of staff about to join Phase 2 presented a useful indicator of attitudes prior to joining DSM. The group raised no issues about the aims of the scheme, although it would be fair to report that some negative comments had been circulated on the local educational 'grapevine' from Phase 1 schools; their concerns tended to centre on areas of uncertainty some of which were only indirectly related to DSM. These included:

- the future of the educational advisory service following local government reorganisation
- the appropriateness of INTEGRA-the computerised finance system being introduced by the Region - as a system for education service users
- the possible diminuition of support as more schools opted into DSM
- a lack of clarity about exactly what would be devolved to school level or retained by the centre, for example behavioural support
- the need for greater differentiation in the training
- the concerns that the historical costs of some budgets, such as energy and telephones, are greater than the amounts being devolved.

These opinions should be compared with the overall feedback from both finance officers and Phase 1 staff who reported that there were no major problems inherent in the scheme. One finance officer suggested that:

> *DSM has the potential to improve school management and many of the initial problems should be ironed out as the scheme matures.*

A Phase 1 headteacher thought that he now:

> *had the ability to direct money according to the school's priorities rather than the Region's*

and that this could bring immediate benefits to the school rather than waiting for the Region to take action on his request which must compete with requests from other schools. However, this potential to effect changes quickly at the school level has been tempered by the realism of being a budget holder at a time of public sector constraint. Headteachers report that in practice most expenditure is fixed. One remarked that there was:

> *less potential to use the funds creatively in the scheme than I had anticipated.*

The problems which tended to arise as one secondary school reported were:

> *with the myriad of items that haven't got specific instructions, you've got to keep going back to them and say "what do we do about these"... we're all including the Region, still finding our way ... there have to be continual discussions and meetings with the finance officers about where various items go. I don't blame anybody for not giving out a comprehensive list of instructions because it's such a vast area... What we are trying to do is find our way with good practice and then write that up and develop something for next year.*

More detailed comments about these particular issues and parts of the scheme now follow.

2.2 How do staff perceive the changing roles?

The education authority

In the published scheme of delegation, the region articulated a new role for the education authority – one which included strategic planning, enabling and quality assurance. The evidence does not indicate that staff have grasped the full meaning and significance of this changed role. Staff tended not to refer to the role of the Authority directly at the macro-level, but looked inwards to their own school and identified the effects of the role changes at a micro-level. Typically, headteachers did not identify the Authority's changed role but perceived its effects. For example as one headteacher reported:

> *DSM has added to my workload. There is less time for teaching and greater emphasis on management and administration.*

However, most felt that the benefits of linking budgets to their own schools' priorities more than out weighed any disadvantages which might accrue.

Some did express concern at the landlord/tenant distinction and although the metaphor was understood, headteachers did not agree that their role was analogous to one of being a tenant. There may be benefit in explaining further the proposed role change of the Authority so that staff can see more clearly the connection between the enabling role of the Authority and the need to retain part of the staff development budget at the centre to resource that aspect of the role.

Additionally, concerns were expressed regarding reorganisation to unitary authorities and how this would affect individual schools and the support they received from special services. These issues contributed to possible role confusion and ambiguity.

Area Finance Officers

This is a new role specifically created to provide financial advice and support to schools in each area - Angus, Dundee and Perth. Two of the posts are held by staff new to both the Region and education service work and therefore they have had to adapt to a new environment very quickly. One is a management accountant recruited from the Scottish Health Service, another is a chartered accountant from the private sector and the third a certified public sector accountant from the Region's own finance department. Any lack of knowledge about the education service appeared to be more than compensated for by the professionalism which this group brings to their posts. Collectively, they form a team with a clearly articulated customer focus. One reports that:

> *I see the schools as clients—very much as I did with small businesses in private practice—and I act as a financial advisor to the headteacher going to visit them in the schools.*

Another described his experiences of working within an internal market in the Scottish Health Service when budgets were devolved to managers and where as an accountant he had to develop a 'customer focus' towards managers by providing them with information in a form which would facilitate their decision-making. The feedback from the schools regarding the finance officers has all been positive and headteachers recognised and appreciated the level of professional expertise provided.

The finance officers expressed concern at the speed required to provide monitoring statements for headteachers and suggested that the tardiness was due primarily to the fact that some budgets, such as absence cover and staff development, were not devolved entirely to schools. The consequence is a dual set of bookkeeping with the resultant extra work and delay in turnaround of financial information.

One finance officer, who had been recruited from the Health Service where actual salary costs had been devolved to individual managers, suggested that practice would make the finance officer's job more efficient. It would also increase the amount of time available for contact with headteachers as opposed to routine coding of items. Some concern was expressed by finance officers and schools regarding the possible diminution of support which would be available as more schools were brought into the scheme. This may become particularly acute in the Dundee area where so far no secondary school has entered DSM.

As a group the finance officers have formed a self-help network which appeared to be operating well. Perha of equal importance the group operates with a very strong customer focus culture – one which other services might wish to emulate.

Headteachers

Of all those involved in DSM the role of the headteacher had the potential for the greatest change. Some headteachers had indicated an initial fear but in most cases their fears had not materialised. The scheme had 'not been as time-consuming as headteachers had initially feared' and with the aid of clerical assistants, they were able to manage the increased responsibilities.

However, the initial fears were not solely concerned with workloads, and some headteachers thought that the role envisaged in the scheme was more analogous to that of the manager of a small business with responsibility for budgets, purchases and property. Although the responsibilities had undoubtedly been increased, headteachers

still perceived their role as educational leaders intimately involved with curriculum development, staff, pupils and parents.

Different degrees of confidence were demonstrated by headteachers in exploring the opportunities offered by the expanded role. Some argued that they were 'unprepared and ill-equipped' for the new role. Others, especially those with specialist knowledge of economics and finance reported as one headteacher did:

> *with my background in accounting, handling the school budget poses no significant challenges especially as the sums of money involved in such a small school are relatively low.*

Support both from the finance officers and school boards appeared to increase the confidence of headteachers who lacked knowledge of budgeting. Some headteachers had experience of accounting and banking and a formal mentoring scheme between the more and less experienced might prove beneficial. A number reported that they would appreciate more regular monitoring statements.

Over the past few years a number of initiatives, such as the SOED *Management Training for Headteachers*, the use of performance indicators and regional staff development have taken place which emphasised the role of headteacher as a manager. Some headteachers perceived DSM as part of this trend towards the further development of more effective and efficient school management. One commented that:

> *there is no conflict between teaching and management priorities. Good management can enable the teaching process. My only concern is that the Region may use efficient management and virement between budget allocations as an excuse to cut budget allocations in the future*

thus mirroring similar experiences from LMS in England.

How headteachers made the connections between their extended role and the core activity of teaching and learning within their schools will be discussed in a later section.

Other teaching staff

There is little evidence that other promoted staff perceived DSM to be affecting them directly and this may be an area for future development. Deputes reflected on the increased workload of headteachers:

> *the rector keeps me involved in what's happening but because he is finding his own way, it tends to be a one-and-a-half man band between himself and the two clerical assistants.*

This was clearly of concern to deputes not so much in terms of the expansion of the role to which they might be promoted, but the more immediate problem if the headteacher were absent for any length of time. Deputes and senior teachers reported that they were not sufficiently familiar with the scheme to be able to administer it if that contingency occurred.

There was no evidence that other staff understood the changes instituted under DSM. One depute suggested that:

> *it makes no difference to the staff at all. The staff always believe that the rector and myself somehow hold purse strings that can be disbursed immediately .... In actual fact it's become a bit easier to do some of the things they want.*

A headteacher in a primary school reported that:

> *Staff didn't want to know. It doesn't affect how they work at all.*

Other staff were reported to 'apathetic and/or cynical towards DSM and concerned about the politically uncertain future'.

Some promoted staff had anticipated that under DSM it would have become easier to purchase teaching materials immediately and have been disappointed with the outcomes. Others suggested that unless schools were allowed to operate with a cheque book, which they felt was unlikely, purchasing would remain slow and schools would be prevented from taking advantage of discounts which suppliers were offering.

There would appear to be ample scope for involving other staff, especially members of the senior management teams in DSM, offering them training and ensuring that they are aware of the cost implications of any planned curricular developments which could then be scheduled more accurately. This need was confirmed by most headteachers.

Support staff

Headteachers readily acknowledged the support they had received from the extra hours of clerical support which the Region had provided for DSM. For the very small schools, this usually entailed employing new staff where no provision had previously been made. The role of school clerical assistant or 'clerkess' had changed as a consequence of DSM. It is now one which demands enhanced skills, an ability to operate with the newer technologies and form a closer working partnership with headteachers.

Clearly, if headteachers are to avoid being drawn into a book-keeping role, then it is essential that they are provided with well-trained clerical assistants with whom they can develop an effective working relationship. Support was expressed by all for the existing clerical staff and the role they performed, however, reservations were voiced about the grading of clerical posts, especially the allocation of a supervisory element and the lack of career opportunities. This was seen to affect adversely the smaller schools in which there may be a tendency for trained staff to move on to larger schools in order to be in an office where they would be able to supervise other staff. Headteachers of smaller schools feared a resultant turnover of support staff and argued that DSM staff should be graded according to the level of skill required to operate the scheme rather than as a supervisor.

Clerical assistants who were long-serving employees of the Region, reflected on the effort that was required to learn new skills but was not fairly recompensed. They were concerned at the lack of career opportunities for younger clerical staff. In the long-term, staff turnover and motivation may become an issue.

Unlike some secondary schools in England and Wales, no Tayside school had appointed a school bursar or finance officer. This may well become an issue as schools review the amount of time spent by headteachers in this area or if available support declines.

Property services

Most participants recognised the significant role change which was required of property services in order to provide headteachers with advice and also ensure that the local authorities legal and quality building standards were maintained. However, there were concerns expressed about how the roles were being negotiated. The finance officers could report that 'establishing a working relationship between property services and headteachers has been problematic. A change in attitude is required on both sides.'

Very strong feelings about relationships with property services were expressed by

many headteachers. One headteacher very forcibly attributed blame to the Property Services Department and perceived that:

> *The whole administration of property is a shambles. There are no set agreed procedures for getting jobs done. Other heads have encountered the same problems and the issue has come up through the DSM self-help group. The source of the problem is the Property Department which has not got its act together.*

This view was echoed by other staff who thought that the clerks of work were not well apprised of the Tayside scheme and that 'confusion prevailed'. Property services, it was argued, appeared unwilling to provide sufficient information to schools to enable them to make informed decisions.

Another headteacher took the view that the flexibility to make decisions regarding property and supplies was more apparent than real and in the short term was dependent on the state of the school at the point of entering DSM:

> *In reality, although decisions about purchasing and contracting are supposed to be devolved, the Region has long-term contracts in operation so, in effect, the school continues to deal with the same firms.*

Also, when that particular headteacher in a very small school, wished to use the services of a local joiner who played in the school's ceilidh band—thus strengthening community relationships—he was not permitted to do so. The desire for flexibility must be balanced by the necessity for adequate insurance cover before work commences.

One headteacher suggested that schools were still 'immature purchasers' who were coming to terms with purchasing opportunities. However, during this period when headteachers were developing their skills, a number of female headteachers commented on the differential treatment which they felt they received from property services. One female headteacher was given the impression that 'I couldn't possibly know what was required as I was only a woman'.

The apparent caution of property services must be balanced by reports of minor repairs being undertaken by school technicians which may have implications for insurance cover and quality standards.

2.3 Was the principle of partnership understood?

Participants did not refer directly to the concept of partnership which underpins the Tayside scheme. However, one headteacher reported that the existence of a supportive School Board encouraged her to manage the budget more confidently and creatively. She knew that any shortfall in the school budget could be met through parents' fund-raising activities. As a consequence, she identified that she was less cautious than some of her colleagues in areas of deprivation who lacked a 'fallback position.' Recently, she had authorised the renovation of an outside store in which PE and drama equipment could be stored.

The Tayside model of education assumes a partnership of directorate, councillors, headteachers, teachers and parents. It would be unrealistic to expect this fully developed model of partnership to have informed DSM at such an early stage in its operation. It is inevitable that in the first year, headteachers, senior staff and administrative/support staff would carry the scheme forward. The Region expects wider partnerships to evolve as the scheme matures.

Formal consultative committees composed of teaching and non-teaching staff were mostly underdeveloped. Some schools reported that DSM Consultative Committees had

been established but had met only occasionally and 'real consultation was limited'. Other staff argued that committees are 'not the best way of securing involvement and commitment from staff as they simply added another level to the management structure'.

Headteachers pointed to the practical difficulties inherent in convening meetings for all grades of staff, especially if part-time non-teaching and janitorial staff within small schools were to attend. Many had solved the problem by including DSM consultation as the first item on the agenda of regular whole staff meetings but there was confusion as to whether the Region would accept this format. Most heads reported that staff were often either apathetic to DSM, believing it was something which concerned only the headteacher, or they lacked knowledge and felt they could not participate. Some headteachers thought that 'the availability of extra money would produce staff interest.' The Region reports that issues of communication and consultation within schools will continue to receive consideration within the department.

2.4 Was the level of support adequate?

Headteachers in smaller schools welcomed the support which the Region provided especially when they had previously lacked clerical support. The 7.5 hours allocated in addition to the previous levels approved but never allocated, was now considered to be sufficient. However, some of the larger primary schools and secondary schools generated considerably more work and required extra clerical assistance if the headteacher's time for other activities were not to be eroded.

The professional advice provided by the finance officers and their team of accounting technicians was rated highly and the only concerns expressed related to a possible decline in the amount and quality as more schools entered the scheme. Headteachers who had contact with other regions reported that colleagues thought that the quality of support declined as more schools joined the scheme.

All recognised that the use of computers was required in order to operate devolved budgets but divergent opinions were expressed about the adequacy of the Apple Mac system. Finance officers felt that many schools under-utilised the Apple Mac provided by the Region and that they should be encouraged to explore other software packages for word processing and filing data.

Schools appeared ambivalent about on-line facilities. The widely reported difficulties which had accompanied the introduction of INTEGRA, as a computerised finance system for all the Region's departments, did not encourage schools to demand access to the on-line facility. There was contradictory evidence on this issue mainly because the computer package had not been designed to meet the specific requirements of an education service. One high school headteacher reported that; 'DSM without INTEGRA would be inconceivable'. Other headteachers thought that the system had much to offer larger primary schools if it were more 'education friendly'. Finance officers suggested that widespread use of on-line facilities could not be justified for the level of budgetary activity of schools below a roll of 200. For smaller schools, a personal computer system supported by monitoring statements appeared to be adequate and schools reported no demand for additional computer support.

There was some concern about the possible isolation of clerical assistants and respondents suggested that networking should be encouraged in order to overcome this.

2.5 Was the training appropriate?

While recognising their own need for training and appreciating the fact that training materials had been developed very rapidly to enable the first phase to be implemented, the consensus from the participants was that the training had not been very effective. A variety of reasons for this were identified and are summarised best by one headteacher who described the training as being: 'bombarded with too much irrelevant information'.

Beginning in January 1994, training was offered to large groups and included DSM scheme training and separate computer training. No account appears to have been taken of the participants' prior knowledge as a consequence of which the composition of the groups was very mixed. Headteachers with finance and accountancy qualifications were trained with others who had no experience of using a computer. No training needs analysis was conducted, so tutors were not able to form differentiated learning groups. Staff from primary and secondary schools were trained in the same group, despite the differences in scale and complexity of their respective budgets.

Unfortunately, participants formed the impression that tutors were themselves in the process of learning how to use the system which led to a lack of credibility. One participant suggested that it was training 'on the hoof' with tutors teaching as the Region was attempting to introduce INTEGRA – the Region-wide computerised finance system. The perceived inadequacies of the training led to the development of *ad hoc* self-help groups in order to fill the gaps. Primary schools, especially those without computer-literate support staff, were the most disadvantaged as secondary headteachers reported that they could always consult computer studies teachers on their staff if they encountered difficulties. One headteacher reported that:

> *Without the support of an experienced secretary, I would have really struggled as the training did not equip me with the necessary skills to cope.*

All participants would have appreciated working with real examples such as their own school's budget, preferably on their own machines within the school with the team who would be expected to operate the systems. The lack of knowledge of deputes and other members of the senior management team was also identified and one depute felt 'clueless in the absence of the head' because of the lack of training.

2.6 Who should provide staff development?

While generally welcoming the devolution of staff development responsibilities and recognising that it could be targeted to the specific needs and proposed developments within the school, staff expressed some confusion about how this was currently operating. For the sake of clarity and speed of operation, the finance officers would prefer that the whole of a budget heading should either be devolved to the schools or retained centrally. Disaggregating budget headings tended to be time-consuming and led to confusion at the school level, as had occurred with staff development and absence cover.

Opinions were less clear at the school level. Some staff did not want the whole of the staff development budget to be devolved and appreciated the role played by the Regional Educational Development Service in terms of curriculum development. However, they did recognise that with the proposed re-organisation of local government, the availability of educational advisors may be problematic. Others welcomed the flexibility of a devolved staff development budget which not only 'increased the awareness of the costs' of training but also allowed more creative use to be made of it. Some staff had been able to link staff development to school development planning and had allowed staff to attend specialist courses outwith the traditional education menus of courses. These ideas were

introduced into the curriculum in, for example, the use of computer graphics into an art department. Although some were grasping this freedom, other staff reported an increased need for more information about staff development opportunities outwith the Region or local educational institutions.

2.7 How should the scheme be evaluated?

No spontaneous opinions were offered by staff about evaluation of the scheme. They appeared to be largely unaware that the Region had given a commitment to monitor and evaluate the first phase of the implementation. This is hardly surprising, and it would probably be unrealistic to expect those caught up in the initial operation to know the exact terms of the scheme. Evaluation models linked to the concept of the self-evaluating school might generate more support and interest at school level.

In the Region's initial evaluation, a 52% response rate had been achieved by use of a questionnaire. A number of staff could not recall its format or had chosen not to complete it because of its length, complexity and competing demands on their time. For whatever reason, almost 50% of phase 1 schools chose not to participate in that evaluation. This would seem to indicate that alternative methods should be developed.

2.8 How has the scheme affected learning and teaching?

In the earlier evaluations undertaken by the Authority, a number of headteachers reported that it was 'too early' to identify the effects of DSM on teaching and learning. The Region reiterated that the *raison d'être* of DSM was to improve the quality of the educational experiences offered to pupils and only if this were to be demonstrated could the scheme be considered a success. It should be noted that under the terms of the scheme, there was no increase to the size of the schools' revenue budget. Therefore, it is from the flexibility to vire funds that the cost of new purchases will be met.

Clearly DSM has the potential to affect teaching and learning, but the effects may not yet be in evidence within the time scale of this evaluation. Additionally, because learning takes place in a complex environment and at any point throughout a person's life cycle, it is not possible to identify a causal relationship between changes in the teaching environment and subsequent effects on learning. Table 2.1 shows in random order the actions actually taken by schools which they identified as indicators of change.

Table 2.1 *Changes identified by staff in phase 1 schools*

purchase of extra computers for use in the classroom
staff development for individual members of staff
temporary cover to allow permanent staff time to attend courses
temporary cover for absent staff to release the headteacher who would normally cover short-term absences
provision of library assistants
removal of partitions/doors to create different use of teaching space
refurbishing an outside shelter in order to store PE and drama equipment
redesign of a language laboratory
creation of a multi-purpose area
replacement of art room equipment
plans to create a new path to a games hall
construction of a new stage for drama
purchase of new musical instruments and construction of storage space
purchase of a new listening centre
plans to purchase more equipment

As can be seen from the above, changes which can impact on teaching and learning fall into three broad categories: new equipment and teaching resources; minor improvement to property and staff and curriculum development activities. The latter are supported by the supply budget which provides cover for staff engaged in staff development activities. As no firm evidence was collected through classroom observation, we are unable to make a connection between changes in the teaching environment and effects on pupil learning. It is reasonable to assume that the changes reported above will have affected the way pupils learn. However, we would suggest that to be really effective, schools must demonstrate that they can operate DSM at three levels as shown in the Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 *Linking DSM to development planning*

Level	Stages	Main Questions for the School
Level 1	Vision	What are we trying to achieve in this school?
Level 2	Strategies	How will we make it happen?
Level 3	Procedures	Where will the money come from?

Only where schools are operating the three as an iterative process will the maximum effects on learning and teaching be produced. Evidence from England (Maychell, 1994) would indicate time is required before schools are able to make a clear link between financial and school development planning.

> Some schools indicated that this had been a gradual, and somewhat difficult process. For example in one school, it had taken three years of delegated budgets before the school development plan and the financial budget were incorporated into one document with cost implications featured alongside each proposed action.

Typically, a number of the Tayside schools operate DSM as a procedural system, and have seized upon the opportunities offered by virement to purchase additional equipment. A number reported that they have either purchased, or intend to purchase, computer hardware, software and library books. The equipment offers tangible proof of spending power, but it is not clear whether the equipment was required, how the decision to purchase was made or how it articulated, if at all, with any planned curriculum developments. We would suggest that purchasing by operating at the procedures stage produces idiosyncratic purchases which have the minimum impact on teaching and learning.

At the second level, DSM schools have developed strategies usually for consultation with other staff and appear to be spending monies on the 'backlog' of items which accrued under the previous system. These include such items as the removal of partitions, the creation of new doors to obviate the necessity of pupils walking through a school hall, the building of an outside store for PE and drama equipment, the redesign of a language laboratory and the creation of a multi-purpose area out of a previously unused space. All of these will undoubtedly affect the lives of pupils who use the school but their impact will be reduced if they are not part of a co-ordinated whole.

At level 1, a school will have articulated a vision and established targets and priority areas in the curriculum for further development. The vision will be linked through the mechanism of school development planning and staff review to the devolved budgets and all decisions about spending will be informed by those priorities. As would be expected during the implementation stage of a new system, there were few examples of this level of integration of management activities having taken place. In one secondary school the

headteacher and the principal teacher of art had been able to link the replacement of equipment and specialised staff development to changes in the art and design syllabus informed by industrial practices. Co-ordinated examples such as that can achieve the maximum impact on teaching and learning but require an understanding of management practices and a developed sense of vision, ownership and co-operation amongst staff. These may be difficult to develop if a large proportion of staff remain 'apathetic' to DSM.

2.9 What are the experiences of the evaluation process?

Evaluation is an expensive process especially in terms of the opportunity costs of the staff who participate in it. Requests to complete lengthy questionnaires or long interviews must compete with other more pressing activities within the school day. Therefore, it is important to ensure that methods are chosen which not only provide reliable data which will answer the evaluation questions, but which also can be justified in terms of costs and benefits.

It is argued that the strength of third party evaluations is objectivity and although not wishing to sacrifice this benefit, we would argue that those who give their time to the evaluation process should also be the beneficiaries. While not wishing to over-estimate the actual benefits from this particular evaluation, the feedback on the process to the evaluators was positive and immediate. One headteacher thanked the evaluators for 'consulting us' and it is clear that methods which acknowledge the knowledge of the participants, as members of an 'expert group' to be consulted, are more likely to generate support.

A number of participants in the focus groups commented on how useful it had been to meet in a group and hear the views of staff at disparate levels from other schools. Although there appeared to be some networks already in existence within the Region, these would appear to reinforce traditional professional boundaries. Focus group participants welcomed the opportunity to compare their own perceptions of DSM with others and hear examples of good practice. Staff who may normally not have access to a professional network, such as support staff, could begin the process of networking within the focus groups. We felt that much informal networking and mutual support would follow. The Authority might wish to encourage this further.

3 Summary and Recommendations

In this chapter, a summary of the main findings as reported in detail in Chapter 2, is provided under thematic headings which correspond to the evaluation questions. Following each summary statement, we have made recommendations which the data would appear to support and which might be considered as a basis for further consultation and action within the Region.

3.1 The scheme

If DSM is to achieve its objectives, then the scheme must be clear and logically consistent in what it proposes. The Tayside scheme following Scottish Office guidelines has delegated over eighty-one per cent of the total education revenue budget to the school level after exempting those items not covered by the scope of the delegation. This is clearly a significant shift of resources and change of responsibilities, and the scheme outlines the role changes which are anticipated. Although in general the scheme is clear, there were points raised by different groups of staff which may require attention in order to clarify areas of ambiguity.

Recommendations

- The scheme clearly envisages that the prime role of the education authority will be in the areas of strategic planning, enabling and quality assurance. This is a significant shift from the previous role of direct provider of services and it is not clear that the envisaged role change is understood within the schools. This might require further discussion and clarification.
- The concept of performance management needs to be explained more clearly. It links the education authority to the Council's strategic plan through service level agreements and each school through school development planning. Regional authority officials may be familiar with the concept but many school-based staff do not fully understand it.
- The language used in the scheme might inadvertently be contributing to confused thinking. For example, the use of the terms 'landlord/tenant' to denote the respective responsibilities of the Authority and headteachers is open to misinterpretation. Headteachers reported that they did not perceive themselves as tenants and the metaphor may be ambiguous. It sits uneasily with the model of the headteacher as curriculum leader.
- Two areas in particular—absence cover and staff development—appeared to be creating difficulties and may require further attention. Not only is extra work involved in coding items but the principle of disaggregating budget headings is confusing. In these instances it reinforces the role of the education authority as a provider. Further clarification may be recommended. In particular finance officers need full information in order to avoid miscoding items.
- The scheme espouses the concept of partnership amongst headteachers, teachers, non teaching staff, school boards and parents' associations. It is not clear how the results of these different consultations can be brought together in a way which is

not too demanding on the time of those involved. Some examples of how this might be achieved would be helpful.

- One of the difficulties of disaggregating budget headings is that the resultant headings will be too small to provide adequate purchasing power. This is a danger in the current scheme because of the large number of small schools within the Region. The Authority may wish to encourage schools to co-operate in order to gain economies of scale. For example, the devolved staff development budget in some schools could be used more effectively if two or more smaller schools planned and purchased school-based staff development.
- Because of past experiences with how budgets have historically been managed in the public sector, it is difficult for schools to comprehend that the Authority has really devolved eighty-one per cent of the revenue budget and is not holding amounts in reserve. It may be necessary to reiterate this point so as to avoid the danger of schools believing that there is a general contingency fund on which to draw if they overspend their school budgets.

Some participants reported other points which are recorded here. These included:

- the lack of control by schools over energy costs incurred during the process of school lets
- the apparent anomaly of using the average salary costs of non-promoted staff and the actual costs for everything else
- the disparate state of repair of school buildings at the commencement of the scheme.

3.2 Roles

As noted in other sections, the DSM scheme proposes a significant change in roles and relationships not only within the schools but also between various departments within the Region. As would be anticipated, some staff are more prepared for role change than others. There are clearly areas of ambiguity where roles are still being developed and how this can be facilitated should be considered.

Recommendations

- There is no evidence that DSM has resulted in headteachers perceiving that their role has become primarily one of managing a small business. However, the demand for good management skills has increased, particularly in the area of communication. It would be helpful if a model of participative management were developed so that headteachers and other staff understood their respective roles.
- So far, training has been offered to headteachers and clerical assistants. In many schools other staff are unaware of how the DSM scheme works and this limits their ability to participate fully by generating suggestions for inclusion in the budget which may arise directly out of their teaching needs. This lack of knowledge, especially amongst other members of the senior management team, could become a serious problem if the headteacher were absent; it is one which deputes have raised. There is a need to raise the awareness and the expertise of other teaching staff so that maximum links to teaching and learning can be made. Possible ways might include school development planning and training—both of which are discussed later.

- Although the precise legal role of school boards is prescribed in the School Board Scotland Act (1988), there is evidence to demonstrate that headteachers, especially in primary schools, feel more confident in their expanded role if they are supported by their school boards. Therefore, we would recommend that headteachers further develop their relationships with boards, where they exist, as this is a possible source of support and advice.
- The relationship between property services and schools needs to be clarified. The DSM scheme proposes an advisory role for property services and this requires the development of new skills and ways of working. There is evidence that the advisory role envisaged is not being implemented and the development of a client/customer culture may be required in order to change traditional ways of working. Specific training in both customer care and the DSM scheme should be provided for members of property services so that they may better understand the needs of schools.
- Many headteachers in Phase 1 have welcomed the additional responsibilities of DSM because of the greater degree of control and flexibility that it would appear to offer them. Particularly in the area of property services, this anticipated flexibility has been absent. Headteachers reported that they would like the flexibility to use local contractors to strengthen links with their local communities, but their ability to place contracts locally has been restricted. This area should be clarified, especially in relation to quality standards and insurance liabilities.

3.3 Partnership

Tayside Region states unequivocally its commitment to the principle of partnership in education and suggests that the successful implementation of the DSM scheme will be dependent upon the involvement of all staff, teaching and non-teaching. Headteachers are required under the terms of the scheme to establish 'mechanisms for consulting staff'.

Recommendations

- The evidence from the evaluation would indicate that schools have established different mechanisms for consulting staff. One-teacher schools have perceived that they are exempt from the directive and have tended not to consult visiting staff or support staff. Other primary schools have included the consultation with non-teaching staff as the first item on the agenda of regular staff meetings; some secondary schools have formed small committees including the headteacher and representatives of the teaching and non-teaching staff. Schools would find it helpful if models of alternative consultative mechanisms were circulated.
- Arranging meetings for groups of teaching and non-teaching staff is problematic because of the different terms and conditions of employment. The Authority may wish to offer guidelines to schools or, alternatively, authorise additional payments to enable non-teaching staff to participate. This is a particular problem for part-time clerical staff in smaller primary schools.
- In secondary schools, non-promoted staff who have the most classroom contact, are also the most remote from DSM. There was an anticipation amongst some that DSM would offer them greater flexibility to respond quickly to learning needs, for example to purchase best-selling novels from a local bargain books shop, however, this has not happened. We would suggest that a co-ordinating mechanism is required in schools to guarantee an input from non-promoted staff. This might

be through departmental meetings making bids for particular projects, a DSM consultative group or by including DSM issues on the agenda of departmental and staff meetings.

- There is no evidence from the evaluation that DSM has affected the management style of headteachers and resulted *per se* in a more open participative style. This may be because the scheme has been perceived to be primarily about budgets and resources management rather than decision-making and styles of management. It is recommended that future training should stress these fundamental issues of partnership and management style rather than concentrating on the mechanics of budgeting.

3.4 Support and information

There was a general consensus that the success of DSM was dependent upon the support provided by the Region in terms of:

- additional hours of in-school clerical support
- computers and software provided to each school
- training offered
- expertise of the area finance officers.

Particular praise was accorded to the area finance officers, who were all qualified accountants, and also to school clerical assistants who were perceived to be inadequately remunerated for the level of expertise now required of them. At this stage there was no widespread demand to be included on an on-line system such as INTEGRA. Some schools lacked confidence in the capability of the system to deal with education specific items but others reported that INTEGRA was an indispensable tool.

All expressed concern about the increased workload of finance officers as more schools came into the scheme and the resultant diminution of the level of support available to schools. In particular, concern was expressed about the amount of time required by secondary schools to manage complex budgets of over £3 million. Additionally, the continuing need for timeous management information was reported.

Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to monitoring the workload of finance officers and their accounting technicians in order to establish an operating ratio for the number of schools which they can support effectively.
- The Region may wish to reaffirm its commitment to maintain adequate levels of support for all schools and calm any anxiety regarding its continuing availability.
- Devolved decision-making increases the information needs of headteachers and the evaluation indicated certain areas which need to be updated if headteachers are to respond efficiently. These include: a list of teachers for short-term absence cover, a list of approved contractors and suppliers of services, a more comprehensive list of courses and suppliers of staff development activities.
- The demands of secondary schools should be monitored to avoid any tendency for them to monopolise the finance officer's time thus restricting the access of primary schools to accounting technicians only.
- Consideration should be given to the choice of computers provided to schools. Small schools which have invested in other PC based systems for pupils use may

find that the Apple Mac provided by the Authority is under-utilised for DSM purposes but cannot be integrated into teaching schemes because of problems of compatibility. Additionally, large schools report that one Apple has proved to be insufficient support and members of the senior management team find it difficult to access.

- In order to minimise the possible negative effects of DSM, information must be provided to headteachers in a way in which they can best utilise. So far, they have appreciated the monitoring statements which are essential if they are to make accurate financial decisions. However, there is often a time lag and some heads would prefer to use an on-line system rather than a PC based approach. Until the initial problems experienced by the Region in its use of INTEGRA are solved, it would seem to be inadvisable to bring more schools on line. Additionally, it may never be cost-effective to include small schools with low numbers of budget transactions in an on-line system. Therefore the only feasible long-term solutions are for schools either to participate in INTEGRA or maintain their own accurate accounting records.

3.5 Training

All the participants recognised their need for both initial and continuing training in order to operate DSM effectively. However, perceptions about the efficacy of the initial training were mixed and reflect the disparate levels of existing knowledge and skills amongst the participants. Some staff had never used a personal computer before: others were experienced users. Timing of the training and unfortunate incidents such as the system crashing during the training, detracted from the credibility of the training.

Recommendations

- We would recommend that the main focus of future training should be experiential and based upon the knowledge which staff already possess. Starting with an overview of the revenue budget for the Region should be eschewed. This latter approach was not well received and was found to be 'off-putting' for those with little prior knowledge of economics and finance.
- Disparate roles of staff would be better understood if training were organised on a multidisciplinary basis to include teaching, support, finance and property services staff.
- We suggest that it would give a sense of realism and immediacy to the training if schools were asked to work with their own budgets during the training course rather than examples generated by the tutors. Issues would cease to be hypothetical and schools would become familiar with their own spread sheets.
- Consideration should be given to determining the most effective methods of training for each part of the course according to the learning objectives. For example, awareness of the scheme may be provided in large mixed groups through very short awareness raising sessions using high-quality overhead projector slides. The skills of how to operate an accounting package may more appropriately be offered at the individual school level to the team which will work together.
- The expertise of area finance officers, who were not in post when the initial training was offered, should be utilised. Additionally, a number of staff have

qualifications in economics, business studies or accountancy and could be integrated into 'witness sessions'.

- In the existing training materials, a distinction should be made between tutoring material and reference material. The design does not facilitate using the materials as a source of reference to support initial training. Too much information is presented and might usefully be divided and presented in a more focused way to specific target groups. The slides showing algorithms, while a useful concept, are far too small to be viewed.
- Examination should be made of the existing training materials to ensure that they conform to the principles of good design. Some of the overhead projector slides have too many words per slide to be really effective and a number of line drawings reinforce the stereotypical view of male dominance in finance and management.
- Exercises and group activities utilised during the training should be based upon actual school budgets and the factors which influence individual schools. The state of repair that the school is in at the commencement of DSM or the actual heating budget would be useful examples. This will increase the sense of realism and interest of participants.

3.6 Staff development

Schools welcomed the opportunity to plan and spend some of the budget for staff development as this allowed them to target it more accurately to the needs of their own staff. Some reported confusion because the budget for staff development was shared with the centre: this perception was supported by the finance officers who found the dual bookkeeping system time-consuming. A number of headteachers preferred that the Region provide some staff development activities and retain the central 'safety net' for long-term absence cover.

Recommendations

- Consideration might be given to allocating the whole of the staff development budget to schools but this would be dependent upon the clarification of the future role of the Educational Advisory Service.

3.7 Evaluation

When introducing any educational innovation, it is important to build into the scheme an appropriate method of evaluation which can be used not only to assess outcomes but also to provide a means of formatively evaluating the scheme. Few of the participants in this current evaluation expressed positive views about the form of evaluation they would prefer. Comments tended to focus on the evaluation instrument—the questionnaire—which most had found to be too lengthy and confusing.

Recommendations

- The process of evaluation should begin with a series of questions to which the Directorate and schools require answers in order to assess the effectiveness of DSM. There is often a tendency to collect too much information which cannot be adequately analysed or presented in a way which illustrates main issues and relationships. Here, there has been an over-reliance on one method of data collection, the questionnaire, and we would recommend that this should be avoided.
- We would also recommend that a three-stage model of evaluation should be adopted which collects data at various stages of the implementation of DSM.

Figure 3.1 shows what this might include.

Figure 3.1 *Proposed stages of the evaluation*

Stage 1	Initial Reaction Level	reactions/attitudes of participants to the training and the scheme
Stage 2	Behavioural Change Level	changes in the behaviour of staff back in their schools
Stage 3	Impact Level	effects of behavioural changes on teaching and learning

It is recommended that all of the levels need not be evaluated at the same time but that different stages might be sampled to provide information as it is required to modify parts of DSM. The current questionnaire sought to collect data for all stages in one instrument and this proved to be confusing.

- If it is considered appropriate to utilise a questionnaire at any stage of the evaluation process, it is recommended that the current one should be redesigned and the different functions it is attempting to perform should be separated out in order to generate more useful information.
- A method which gives the respondents the opportunities to share their perceptions with other colleagues and the evaluators would generate more useful data and articulate with the philosophy of the self-evaluating school.
- It would be more effective, if the evaluation of the training as a discrete element of DSM were conducted closer to the delivery of the training as some participants could not recall accurately the initial training because of the elapse of time. Using a short group evaluation activity at the end of each training session would provide immediate feedback on the delivery of the training.

3.8 Effects on learning and teaching

DSM has the capability to influence learning and teaching in two ways: either positively through planned purchase of materials and services which could have a direct impact on the teaching environment, or negatively by diverting the time which staff could have spent on curriculum development to routine financial matters.

The evidence from the evaluation indicates that, with adequate levels of support from finance officers and dedicated clerical staff, the negative effects of DSM on the curriculum can be minimised. Some headteachers have already developed a vision of an expanded managerial role under DSM. This enables them to utilise the resources which they now control for the improvement of the learning environment.

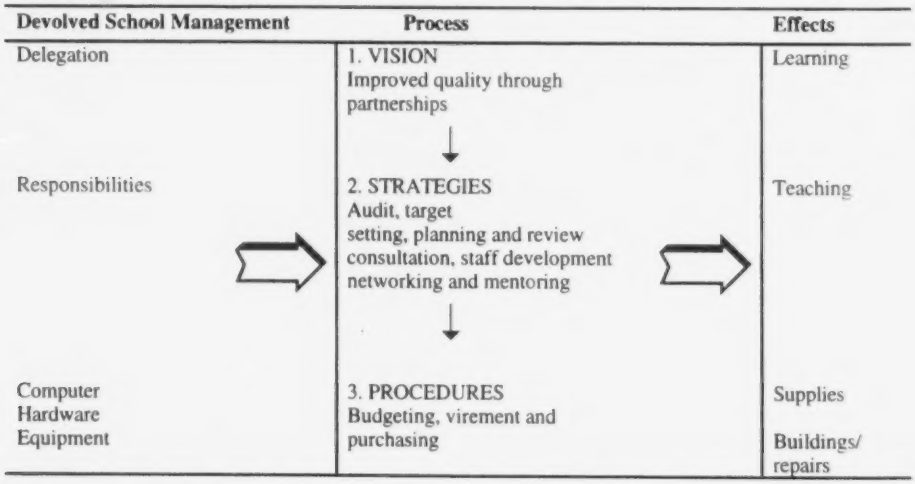
Recommendations

- In the Region's evaluation many headteachers reported that it was too early to identify any changes which might have occurred as a consequence of DSM. Perhaps, the timescale was too short and the evaluation should have identified actions with the potential to affect teaching and learning, for example offering staff development in areas which articulate with targets and priorities already established in the school development plan.
- Maximum effects could be gained from DSM if schools were encouraged to bring together the three initiatives—school development planning, staff development and review and DSM—and identify the links between each for forward planning purposes. Staff should be encouraged to develop costed proposals for developments

which would enable them to rank items against the targets identified in the development plans.

- The evidence from the evaluation would indicate that a number of headteachers have used the flexibility of DSM to purchase extra resources for teaching, for example computers or make minor works changes to doors or language laboratories which have altered the use of teaching space. Others have increased their storage space which can be usefully used for PE and drama equipment. These examples of good practice should be collated and disseminated.
- It should be remembered that the major part of a school's budget is fixed and the amounts which can be saved or vired tend to be small. However, headteachers have indicated that they appreciated having direct control of even small amounts which they can target to areas of the curriculum which they wish to develop. This has allowed them to institute changes immediately rather than compete with other schools for amounts from a centrally held budget. Because of the disparate size of school budgets and the small amounts it is possible to vire, the Authority might wish to interpret flexibly the amounts schools are allowed to carry over from one year to another. Creation of suspense accounts may be one way to encourage headteachers to budget for larger items which they would otherwise be unable to purchase in any one year.
- A working model showing the relationship between DSM and the possible effects on learning and teaching may help school staff see how they can gain the maximum educational benefit from the scheme. The diagram, based upon evidence provided by respondents, provides a representation of the different levels at which schools can operate DSM. We suggest that some schools in the evaluation were operating at the procedural level (level 3) which resulted in minimum effect on learning. An iterative process which develops the connections between procedures, strategy and vision, (all three levels) would produce the maximum effects. Diagrammatically this can be represented as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 *Working Model of the DSM Process*



Staff should be encouraged to start the process with a vision which has been developed collectively through discussion using inputs from audit, inspection and School Boards.

Purchases from the devolved budgets, for example of equipment and staff training, should relate to priorities identified in the school development plan. DSM should provide the resources by which the plan can be achieved.

If schools focus on the DSM procedures then there is a danger that effects will be idiosyncratic and relate predominantly to building and equipment.

3.9 The evaluation experience

Most of the staff who participated in the focus group method of evaluation felt that it was a worthwhile activity and this contrasts with their lack of support for formal questionnaires. Not only did the groups provide a forum in which to consult staff but also one in which their experiences could be acknowledged and valued. The groups were unusual because they were composed of headteachers, other promoted teachers and support staff who may not normally meet together. Staff reported that they had gained different insights into the workings of DSM through this method of evaluation. Additionally, staff who were not part of a formal network were able to make contact with others and facilitate further networking.

Recommendation

- Regular focus group meetings facilitated by a member of the Directorate or Educational Advisory Service should be built into the continuing evaluation process. Not only would it appear to be a more effective method of assessing the progress than the use of questionnaires, but it would also provide a way to probe perceptions and establish networks.

3.10 Future implementation

Headteachers, other promoted teachers, support staff and finance officers who participated in the evaluation were reasonably positive about DSM and the general feeling was that their anticipated fears had not materialised. However, when asked to contemplate the future, the most commonly expressed concern was about the level of future support, not only to schools about to enter the scheme but also those already operating DSM. If continuing support is perceived to be inadequate, schools may press for the appointment of school bursars or finance officers as has been reported from schools in England – a trend identified in section 1.4.

Additionally, managers learn best from each other and rate the information gained in that way higher than from other sources. Clearly, staff involved in Phase 1 had learnt a lot from being in the forefront of the innovation and given that resources within the public sector are limited, then some way of utilising this expertise is required.

Recommendations

- We would recommend that ways of utilising the expertise already developed should be built into the next phase of the implementation. This could take the form of peer group partnering and networking. This would enable staff in Phase 1 schools to maintain their knowledge of the system at a time when finance officers would be under pressure from schools in subsequent phases.

- Secondly, Phase 1 staff could be assigned as mentors for schools about to join Phase 2. This process should not be restricted to headteachers but might also include support staff who in many ways are more isolated and lack contact with colleagues in similar positions.

Conclusion

This formative evaluation was undertaken during a period of rapid change. Some of the issues reported here have already received attention as the second phase was implemented. In particular, the Region intends to involve the area finance officers in the training offered to staff in the subsequent phases. We understand that the Region will continue to review the operation of the scheme paying particular attention *inter alia* to absence cover, communication and consultation within schools, evaluation and links between DSM and school development planning.

There are lessons to be learnt from organisational development initiatives such as DSM. Whenever roles and responsibilities are changed, ambiguity and uncertainty results. The evidence from Tayside shows that although in general headteachers welcomed the initiative, a number of issues remained to be resolved. Focused training, additional support and opportunities for role clarification will contribute to effective implementation and reduce feelings of uncertainty. Additionally as some teachers pointed out, their expectations for DSM may have been unrealistically high and beyond the scope of the scheme. As one teacher recalled: 'I'll really only be happy when this school has its own cheque book' - a difficult concept for the public sector. Changes in the emphasis of budgetary control, from the education authority to schools, cannot be expected to provide an instant panacea to a plethora of education issues. It is likely that the effects on learning and teaching will take time to appear, as the Tayside evidence has demonstrated. It may be some years before schools develop the skills to produce fully integrated and costed development plans.

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